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Jeffries said to pass Soviets vital sub data

By Bill Gertz
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Documents allegedly passed to the Soviet Union by a courier for a House stenographic reporting firm contained top-secret details of what U.S. officials describe as the most vital component of the administration's strategic force modernization plan, according to U.S. government sources.

Randy M. Jeffries was charged last week with passing 28 "sample" pages of top-secret and secret documents from closed hearings of a House Armed Services subcommittee, including portions of a top-secret transcript on command, control, communications and intelligence or "C³I" — pronounced "see cubed eye".

Federal prosecutors said Mr. Jeffries planned to sell the Soviets three complete documents for $5,000.

The top-secret portions of a Feb. 28 briefing on C³I before the House subcommittee on procurement and military nuclear systems were included among documents Mr. Jeffries turned over to Soviet military officials between Dec. 14 and the time he was arrested Dec. 20, sources said.

Sources said the transcript also contained top-secret data on the Navy's extremely low-frequency communications systems used to signal nuclear submarines stationed around the world.

"It's the most sensitive issue in strategic force modernization," said one government defense expert who declined to be named.

Since 1981, the Reagan administration has invested tens of billions of dollars in modernizing the system used for conducting nuclear war, according to Defense Department officials.

A spokesman from the Soviet military and naval office in Northwest Washington, who would not provide his name, said, "We have no information about this case."

The office conducts "official business," but when asked to specify what type of activities, the Soviet official said, "You can guess."

An FBI agent involved in Mr. Jeffries' arrest testified last week that Mr. Jeffries had given a briefcase believed to contain the top-secret C³I briefing transcript and two other documents classified "secret" to a "trusted friend."

G. Allen Dale, Mr. Jeffries defense attorney, stated in court that he had spoken to the friend who said the documents had been burned following a message from "someone on the phone." He said the friend was someone "who the government could not find."

FBI agents are continuing to investigate Mr. Jeffries, a bureau spokesman said last week.

Depending on what portions were passed as samples, the secret House transcripts could have provided the the Soviets with a progress report on one of the most secret elements of the strategic C³I modernization: future plans to use blue-green laser communications links relayed by lasers on satellites from command posts to submerged submarines and a program of long-range, airborne communications centers, according to government sources.

Blue-green lasers and low-frequency radio signals are two possible methods U.S. planners hope to use in sending wartime messages to nuclear missile carrying submarines without causing them to reveal their locations.

Court papers stated that the transcript included the closed session testimony of Donald Latham, assistant secretary of defense for command, communications, control and intelligence, before the House subcommittee Feb. 28.

The declassified testimony revealed that Mr. Latham asked if all the staff in the hearing room held security clearances because "there is some TS [top secret] material in the briefing."

Mr. Latham indicated that C³I modernization was a "vital area" of the strategic force modernization.

"It is going to take time and it is going to require sustained support through the rest of the decade," Mr. Latham told the subcommittee.

Mr. Latham's testimony mentions censored details on the "blue laser" proposal to communicate with nuclear submarines while they are submerged.

"If that can be proven to work, we probably would deploy that, assuming we could somehow make that satellite system survivable ... [deleted]," the censored transcript states.

The top-secret documents on C³I also contained details on a long-range communications aircraft known as the E-6A TACAMO, for "take charge and move out," that will increase the range of communications with submarines, according to U.S. government sources.

The Reagan administration requested $400 million this year for two E-6A modified Boeing 707 aircraft that will be hardened against the electromagnetic effects of a nuclear blast and used to signal submarines in the Pacific Ocean by trailing an antenna several miles long.

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